

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Administrative, Planning Codes - Digital Light Displays on the East Façade of City Hall]

Ordinance amending the Administrative and Planning Codes to allow City-approved digitally projected light displays on the east façade of City Hall; affirming the Planning Department’s determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; making findings of public necessity, convenience, and welfare; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

Existing Law

Currently, Section 608.3 of the Planning Code prohibits any general advertising sign, and any other sign exceeding 200 square feet in area, within the Civic Center Special Sign Districts Numbers 1 and 2, as designated on Sectional Map SSD of the Zoning Map of the City and County of San Francisco. Within such districts, no sign that is located on publicly owned property, or that is located on a street frontage facing publicly owned property, shall have any moving, rotating or otherwise animated part; or have any flashing, blinking, fluctuating or otherwise animated light; or project beyond any street property line or building setback line; or be attached to a building in any manner other than with its entire area flat against a wall of such building that directly faces a street.

In addition, Section 603 of the Planning Code exempts certain categories of signs from regulation by Article 6 of the Planning Code (Signs), including, among other categories, official public notices, notices posted by public officers in performance of their duties, and temporary displays of a patriotic, religious, charitable or other civic character. (Planning Code § 603, subds. (a) & (c).)

Amendments to Current Law

This ordinance would amend the Administrative and Planning Codes to allow the projection of City-approved digital light displays on the east façade of City Hall. Proposed Section 4.1-1 of the Administrative Code sets forth the requirements for permitted digital light displays on the east façade of City Hall. The proposed amendment of Section 603 of the Planning Code to add subsection (p) exempts these displays from the requirements of Section 608.3 of the Planning Code, to the extent they are not already exempted by Section 603.

Such displays may not extend above the height of the pediment of the façade (the triangular gable above the east entrance to City Hall). All displays must be approved in advance by the City Administrator and must comply with rules and regulations to be prescribed by the Director of Administrative Services. Any message conveyed shall be one the City wishes to communicate. Messages may include, without limitation, an acknowledgment or celebration

of a City-sponsored event, a City-funded event, and any other special event or occasion. A display shall not involve the attachment or placement of any permanent or temporary material on or against City Hall. Pursuant to Administrative Code Section 4.20-1, no display shall be a general advertising sign.

Background Information

The City has long displayed flags and banners on the east façade of City Hall to foster civic pride, promote City events, acknowledge supporters of City events, and convey other governmental messages. The projection of digital light displays will supplement and modernize this practice through the display of both moving and still images.

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